

PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

## Richmond Police Sr. Patrolman Kelly Rouse

KELLY FOREMAN | PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

The lives of two terrified people hung in the balance as a masked gunman stood above them, their tearful faces buried in the floor with a pistol aimed at the back of their heads. He yelled — “Where’s the money?! Where’s the f\*\*\*ing money?!”

It was late on Jan. 22, 2011, well past closing time at Richmond’s Kentucky Fried Chicken when 39-year-old Michael McCullen pushed his way in the back door of the restaurant to empty the cash registers. When he realized he couldn’t get any cash from them, he became infuriated. He told the employees he was going to shoot them, and he had them ready for their deaths when Richmond Police Senior Patrolman Kelly Rouse stormed in.

McCullen, a convicted felon, instead lost his life that night, when he raised his pistol to shoot Rouse. He was met with a single shot from the officer’s shotgun that ended the intense standoff and left the innocent unharmed. Recently, in honor of his bravery, he was honored as the 2011 Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer of the Year by the American Police Hall of Fame and Museum in Florida.

Rouse, a seven-year RPD veteran, also has served Madison County as a paramedic for more than 14 years and spent 20 years as an infantryman in the U.S. Marines. He takes his duty to protect the public seriously — he clearly has devoted his life to it. For that service, Rouse also was awarded a Silver Star for bravery and designation as a “Knight Chevalier” from the Venerable Order of the Knights of Michael the Archangel, “in recognition of a pledge to support efforts in a worldwide battle against crime and to carry on the modern-day tradition to protect the weak and hungry against all evil doers,” a proclamation states.

**We are always getting feedback of some sort, whether it’s negative or positive.** But, it seems like in the past year, we have gotten a lot of positive feedback. Especially with the detectives who have finally broken a murder case with two missing people. The past two days, everywhere I go I’m getting a pat on the back — not me personally — but the department. I get, ‘Good job, tell the police officers who are working the case we appreciate them,’ and it’s really good.

“So, I gathered myself, came in the back door and raised my shotgun. I pointed it at the bad guy and I said, ‘Drop your weapon.’ I mean, I’m yelling, ‘Drop your weapon! Drop your weapon!’”

**After the shooting incident,** my name was kept out of the papers, but you know, word spreads by mouth and everything. There was a lot of public support and a lot of support amongst the police department here. There’s not very many times that officers are involved in shooting incidents and the department really handled it well. They made me feel like they had my back, that they were going to support me. And the people who were being held hostage at KFC — I mean, I’ve never been in KFC since that day, but if I drive past, the manager will come out in the parking lot, wave me over and shake my hand. If I see him out on a call in a neighborhood, he’ll come over. He introduced me to his children because he said he thought he would never see his children again after that night. Positive feedback like that is what I like from the job. Knowing that you’re actually making a difference in your community.

**January 22. It was almost quitting time.** I remember we got a call to assist EMS in regard to a diabetic emergency — somebody was being combative because of low blood sugar. If you hit a good golf ball shot you could probably hit KFC from where I was. The paramedics were just wrapping up, so I was standing on the front porch with them and Officer Nick Duvall. A call came out that there was an armed robbery in progress at KFC. I could literally step out away from the ambulance and see KFC. So me and Duvall got in our cars and proceeded toward the KFC. We didn’t know it, but another officer (Mason Dale) was right across the street at Wal-Mart.

We all three arrived simultaneously at KFC. Officer Duvall positioned himself on the west side of the building and Mason Dale positioned himself on the east side, kind of the front of the building. We had no communication, we just did it. I pulled my vehicle around back. I’m thinking, if there is an armed robbery in progress, I’m getting my shotgun out. Anytime I know there is a weapon involved, I’m getting a bigger weapon than the guy I’m going up

against. So I get my shotgun, racked the shell in there, and as I’m getting it out of the trunk, I can hear somebody yelling and arguing. So I look over and the back door where they take out the garbage is open, just slightly.

I walked over, and when I peeked in the door — it’s the kitchen/food-prep area. It’s kind of like a hallway with an open area off to the side where they prep the food. I see two people face down on the floor, spread eagle. And there’s a dark figure standing over top of them. He’s got a pistol pointed at the back of their heads and he’s screaming, ‘Where’s the money?! Where’s the f\*\*\*ing money?!’

**I’m standing there looking at him, I back up and think, ‘Man, this is real.’** He’s still yelling and cussing and I’m thinking, he’s going to kill these people because he has them in the execution position.

I didn’t know there were two other employees who had barricaded themselves in the manager’s office. They had seen what was going on, shut the door, locked it and were on the phone with 911. So I gathered myself, came in the back door and raised my shotgun. I pointed it at the bad guy and I said, ‘Drop your weapon.’ I mean, I’m yelling, ‘Drop your weapon! Drop your weapon!’

**The guy looks up and he has this big scary Halloween mask on.** (Interviewer: What kind of mask?) I don’t know, because I was focused on the gun.

When he looks up and sees me, he starts backing up. So as he’s backing up, I’m walking forward and I’ve got him right in my sights. He sees I’m coming after him and he turns and runs out of sight. He’s up behind the bar and there’s a pop machine right there. So I come up to the cash register and I’m telling him, ‘Drop your weapon. Come out with your hands up. Drop your weapon!’ So I step in between him and the people who are laying on the floor. I don’t know what they’re doing because I’m focusing on this guy, where if he peeks >>



>> around the corner, I still have him in my sights.

**Next thing I know, he bolts out from behind his cover, raises his weapon** and he’s still got that big, scary, Halloween mask on. But when he brought up that weapon, I mean, he was probably 15 feet away. I can literally visualize the end of that weapon, and that barrel looked like it was huge. As soon as he brought it up and it was level with my head, I put one round in him. It hit him in the armpit. I shot and he fell and slid, kind of like a baseball slide. He just slides and almost lands right in front of me.

I still have my weapon trained on him, still telling him, ‘Drop your weapon!’ It was still literally in his hand. I’m telling him, ‘Don’t you move, get your hand off the weapon! Get your hand off the weapon!’

The adrenaline is going. I’m really focused. I get on my radio as soon as I fire my shot and he falls. I don’t know how I had the presence of mind to do this, but I said, ‘Officer involved shooting, I need EMS, signal 9,’ which means emergency traffic.

The next thing I know, I hear Mason Dale get on the radio and say, ‘Shots fired, shots fired!’ He’s at the front of the store, and he doesn’t know what’s going on.

**I’m still covering him, still giving him loud commands, ‘Get your hand off the weapon! Don’t you move!’** Next thing I know, here comes Duvall and Dale. They’ve run in not knowing what in the world is going on. I have to give kudos to them. They don’t know if I’m shot, they don’t know if anybody’s shot, but they come busting in there like Batman and Robin. So they jump over the counter and Dale immediately kicks the weapon out from his reach and they roll him over onto his back. I tell them, ‘Watch him guys, I don’t think I hit him.’ Because there’s no blood anywhere. I know if I shot him with a one ounce slug at 15 feet there’s going to be blood.

That’s when I look up and, at KFC, they have those big, glass windows from floor to ceiling. I start looking at the glass thinking I’ve missed this guy. I’m looking for a bullet hole and thinking, ‘Man, I hope I didn’t

miss this guy, and it went somewhere out in the public.’ Duvall and Dale roll him over, and when they do, they jerk the mask off of him. Then they start taking layers of clothes off. He had on a big, thick, heavy Carhartt jacket. They take that off. Then he’s got a hooded sweatshirt on. They take that off. Then he has another shirt on, and they take that off. Then I see he’s wearing a bullet proof vest. I was like, ‘holy crap.’

**About that time, here comes the cavalry.** There are sheriff’s deputies at the front door, Kentucky State Police troopers, fellow Richmond officers, the ambulance shows up. They’re starting to do their thing, taping everything off, and all of a sudden, an officer says, ‘He’s been hit.’ He starts bleeding from the hole right there. So they immediately start pressure. EMS does what they have to do, loads him up in the ambulance and they’re gone.

**I thought, I’ve hit him in that bullet proof vest,** and that has slowed the slug down enough to where it’s not a fatal injury. I know the paramedics who showed up, because I work with them. So, after about 15 minutes, I call the paramedics and I’m just thinking they took him to Pattie A. Clay [Regional Medical Center in Richmond].

I said, ‘Hey, this is Rouse, how’s that guy doing?’

They said, ‘We’re doing CPR on him.’

I said, ‘Is he injured that bad?’

‘Yeah, the bullet didn’t hit the vest, it went under his arm straight through his chest.’

**I got really nervous, because now I was starting to come down off that rush,** you’re starting to rationalize things and trying to piece things together exactly as it happened. I was thinking, this is what we’re trained for. I mean, this is stuff you see on TV. I wasn’t thinking that in my head, but you’re like, ‘Did that really happen?’

I knew since it was an officer involved shooting there was going to be an investigation. I started trying to remember as much as I could. It really hit me right then, that guy was going to execute those two people. Let me back up. When EMS comes and takes this guy away, they find the other two employees locked in there. I had no idea they were there. I start realizing, that guy would have killed everybody in that

restaurant to get what he wanted. He had on two pairs of latex rubber gloves and another pair of regular gloves. That’s why he had so many layers of clothes on — because he was going to come into the kitchen, and he was preparing to have a fight. What’s the only thing you can use as a weapon in the kitchen? A knife. So he had on those layers of clothes to protect his skin from slashes from a knife. He had on a bullet proof vest, just in case of people stabbing him. He really meant business.

**The command staff comes in, and they’re telling me everything is going to be OK,** everything appears that you did the right thing. But you always have that little seed that’s planted back here, you know? What if? And I was a little apprehensive after the incident thinking, I hope that everything turns out well because you never know. When someone loses their life, somebody has to answer. I was really worried about the police department being painted in a bad light. Because that was the last thing I wanted, for me and my fellow officers to be chastised over something that, at the time, seemed necessary.

**The next day, they sent me home after what seemed like forever.** Chief Larry Brock called me the next day and told me the guy had passed away. He never stood a chance. From what they told me, when the round went through, it cut his spinal cord and ended up lodged in his arm. We’re always trained to shoot center mass. And if you think about it, if your center mass is sideways, if you’re facing your target, it’s perfect. That’s how the round missed the vest. If I had aimed just a little bit lower than center mass, it would have hit his vest, or a little higher it would have hit him up in the arm somewhere. It was the shot of a lifetime.

**I think the only reason he didn’t get a shot off was because he couldn’t see me** because of the mask. When he was running, the mask got jumbled and the eye holes weren’t lined up with his line of vision.

**I saw the video because KFC had videos watching the cash registers.** Goosebumps. You talk about somebody walking over your grave. I’m getting goosebumps right now thinking about it. I don’t remember the recoil of the weapon. I don’t remember the

## Accolades for Kelly Rouse

“The American Police Hall of Fame annually selects an Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer of the Year to recognize performance above and beyond the call of duty. For the past 23 years, we have recognized one special officer who has displayed courage and bravery in a special or unique situation . . . .”  
— **Barry Shepherd**, executive director of the American Police Hall of Fame and Museum

“I was the cook who was on the ground when you came in. I know that I have had some bad run-ins with you before, but you saved my life. If it wasn’t for your quick thinking and quick response time, I think that I would be dead. Thank you so much. I will never forget what you did for me. I know it may be hard to deal with taking a life, but you saved four people. I have two kids, both boys, and because of you, I got to see them again. I thank you with everything that I have.”  
— **Steven Warren**

“Officer Rouse’s actions were in the highest tradition of law enforcement. He confronted a potentially deadly threat, placed himself between the threat and the employees to protect the innocent and reacted properly when his own safety was placed at risk. Absent his intervention, there is a strong possibility that the employees of KFC would not be among us today.”  
— Richmond Police **Chief Larry Brock**



▲ Richmond Police Sr. Patrolman Kelly Rouse, left, was presented with a plaque honoring him as the 2011 American Police Hall of Fame Officer of the Year. Richmond Police Chief Larry Brock, right, attended the Florida ceremony recognizing Rouse.

kick. I mean, when you shoot a shotgun it slams into your shoulder. I don’t remember anything. I don’t remember hearing the shot, I don’t remember jacking another round in preparing to shoot again. But you could see that on the video.

**Just a few months before, I went to the active shooter class** and they tell you, when you see somebody with a weapon and they retreat, you immediately advance on them because you don’t know who else is in there. You don’t know if they are going to take other hostages. You don’t know if they are going to go in a room and start killing people. You have to be prepared for the next bad guy once you take the first bad guy down. So the training I received [at the Department of Criminal Justice Training] was monumental in the outcome.

I spoke with Mr. Bill Sullivan and another [DOCJT] instructor and said, ‘Everything you taught, everything that was given in class was almost exactly the way that incident panned out. Thanks for the training. Otherwise, it may not have turned out the way it did.’

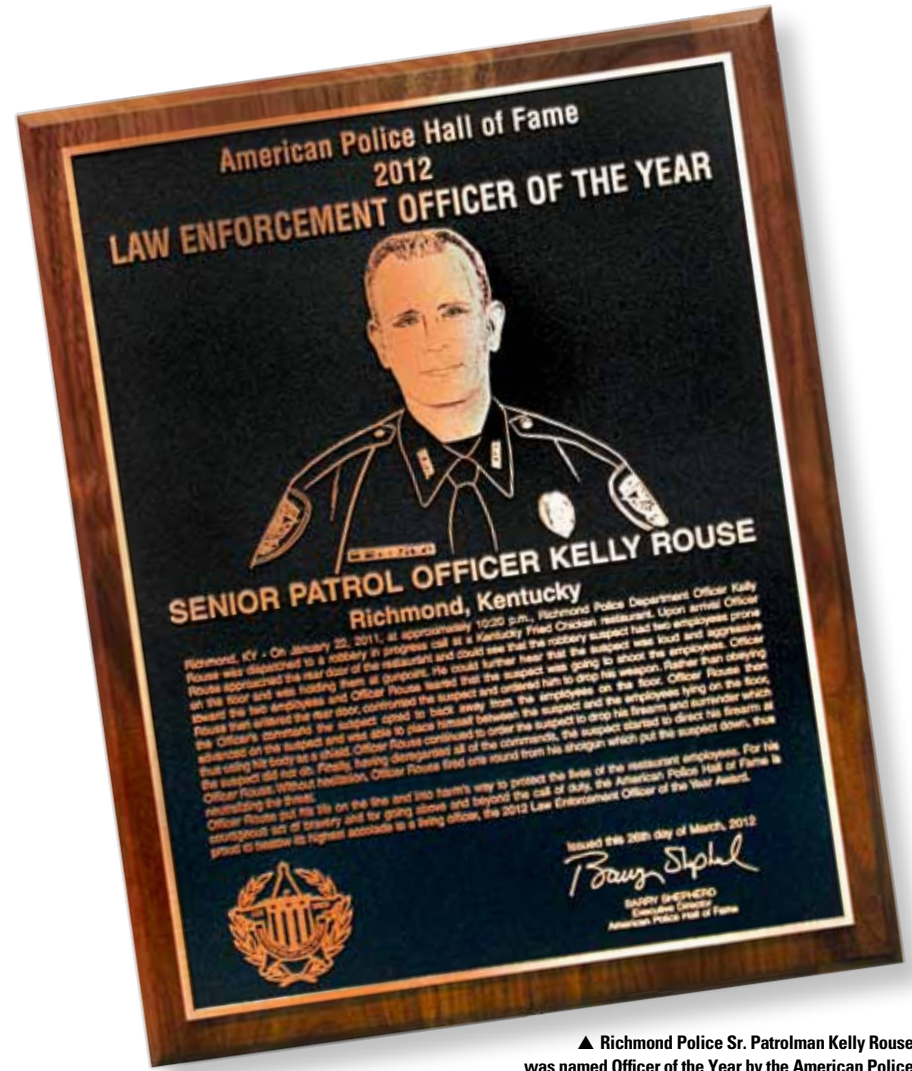
**In the military when you use deadly force, you literally step over the bodies and you**

**keep moving forward.** You don’t know anything about them. You don’t know anything about their families, if they had a job — you don’t even remember their faces. They are a combatant, you eliminated the threat and you move on to the next combatant. Here, it’s in the paper for days. You know he had a wife and a job. You know about his background. This guy had done this kind of thing before and actually served some time.

Then you also realize that your tax dollars are going to pay his salary because he worked for the daggone government. (He was an upholsterer for the state Finance and Administration Cabinet.) So, my taxes are going to pay his salary, then he turns a weapon on me? It kind of made me mad. Like, what else do you want from me? I pay your salary then you turn around and want to take my life from me or take the lives of somebody else? He was just a consumer. All he did was consume other people’s good will and that made me mad. It really did.

**He did time for this before and he’s a suspect in several other armed robberies** in the area. After I found out a little bit more about him and his criminal history, >>





▲ Richmond Police Sr. Patrolman Kelly Rouse was named Officer of the Year by the American Police Hall of Fame for his bravery and professionalism during an armed robbery in which he rescued several Kentucky Fried Chicken employees from what they believed a certain death.



PHOTOS SUBMITTED



>> I was almost relieved, you know, that this wasn't just a one-time thing. It wasn't just somebody desperate. He had made his life choices. I don't think I'm glad to say it, but he won't be hurting anybody else now. He won't be putting anybody else in that situation.

When Chief Brock told me I was receiving this award, I actually told him I thought the whole second shift should be recognized, because those guys didn't know what they were entering. They heard shots fired, they knew an officer was in the building, and they came in literally with no regard for their own safety. None. If I would have been the one shot, I'm sure they would have done what they had to do to pull my body out if necessary. It almost makes you teary-eyed that they think that much about their fellow co-worker, to come in there and, if need be, to take another life to get their co-worker out. Where else does that happen? You see all these other shootings and people are running the other way. But the police and my co-workers were running toward the bad guy. It's amazing.

After a couple days, once you piece everything together and realize what the bad guy's intentions were, you realize everything is going to be alright. He came to a fight. I mean, he came prepared. It's kind of like looking back on my military combat experience. Everybody has a choice. Those terrorists or those bad guys, they could either get with the program, accept their new government, accept this regime is over and try to help their country get back on its feet. Or, they can face the wrath of the U.S. military.

In this situation, he had a choice. Just an hour or two before he was home with his wife watching TV. He told her, 'I'll be back in a little while, I've got something to do.'

◀ (Far Left) Richmond Police Sr. Patrolman Kelly Rouse, left, received his national award from Jack Rinchich, president of the American Police Hall of Fame during a ceremony in Orlando, Fla.

◀ (Left) The family of Richmond Police Sr. Patrolman Kelly Rouse joined him in Florida as he was honored as the American Police Hall of Fame 2011 Officer of the Year.

He could have stayed home with his wife and family. He could have. He chose to go out and participate in an activity where somebody was going to get killed — him, the police or the people he was trying to rob. He had a choice to stay home. Ultimately, it was a bad choice for him.

I have two kids. I have a daughter who is 21 and lives in California with her mother — who is also a police officer. Then, I have a son who, at the time of the shooting, was 16. Anytime I'm late, I always try to call my wife and say, 'Hey, I'm OK, don't worry, here's what happened.' After about an hour, I called her and said I was going to be late. She asked if everything was OK and I said, 'No, I've had to shoot somebody.' Automatically she was in denial. I think she was more upset than I was.

When I came home from Iraq, I had trouble sleeping because of some of the pent up aggression that you have from being forced into taking other people's lives. Taking a life — you're not programmed to kill people. I think everybody is programmed to help people. I guess she thought maybe I was going to have some lingering issues because she asked, 'Are you OK? How are you feeling?' I told her, 'I'm feeling fine. He put me in a no-win situation.' So I had to tell her what was going on, we talked for several minutes, I said, 'I'll call you back when I know something more.'

I didn't tell my son until the next day. We sat on the front porch, drank some coffee, and I told him what happened. I said, 'You're going to see my name in the paper here in the next little bit. It's going to be talked about a lot, maybe by your friends at school.' I told him, 'Here's what you need to expect, and here's what you need to tell them. You just tell them your dad was forced into a situation where he had no choice other than to kill somebody. That's just the way it is. If people don't like that answer, you tell them to come talk to me. But don't let them say anything negative to you.' They never did. There was nothing but positive feedback from the population.

You know teenagers, they see so much on TV these days, I guess they're conditioned to carnage and death. He just said,

'Well dad, I'd rather have you here than not have you here. You did what you had to do.' I don't think they realize the severity of the situation until they grow up and mature a little bit.

[Receiving the award] was very humbling. I mean, of all the police officers across 50 states, I was chosen to represent my department and my state. Well, how do you respond to that? Even being nominated for something like that is just a blessing. But to actually receive the award, I almost don't even believe it myself. When I received the award, I said I felt very undeserving. With so many people trying to get out here and make a difference, I'm very undeserving, I think.

It's a long wall, and up at the top it says National Police Officer of the Year. It starts with the year it started and goes across in rows. We went to the Hall of Fame the day before the ceremony, and it's actually a museum. We're walking around and it has badges from Wyatt Earp and even has his pistol in there. We're walking around, me and my son and Chief Brock, and we were almost to the end and I said, 'Wow, these are all the guys who have won it before. Chief says, 'Yeah, you ought to go over and read that last one, it's pretty interesting.' I went over there and they already had mine up. I was like, 'Oh my gosh, that's — wow.' I had no idea, none whatsoever.

I don't have the words to describe how it makes you feel just so many emotions rolled into one. I'm lucky that I survived the incident in the first place. I feel humbled that people actually recognize me and other law enforcement officers and agencies. But I'm humbled knowing that somebody out there knows what you do for a living and appreciates you. So many other people out there are doing the same job as you. Why should I be singled out? I think all police officers' names should be up there, if you want to know the truth about it. Every one of us. But, then again, I might have a biased opinion.

Police officers get lulled sometimes into a false sense of security. You get the same routine calls every day. And, I think for not all but some police officers, you don't expect to be put in a situation like that.

You're always trained to, but you never think it's going to happen to you. I can tell you one thing. Every time now those emergency tones go off and they say there's somebody out there with a gun — whether it's somebody fighting or a domestic or whatever — I expect to see a gun when I get there. I expect somebody to be there with bad intentions in their heart. So I think it just puts you a little bit more alert. I guess you can mentally prepare yourself a little more as you're driving to the scene to actually prepare yourself for battle. I mean, not just get out there trying to break up two people who are in an argument, but when you're going to a call, mentally prepare yourself for battle. Because it could happen in a millisecond. Somebody could pull out a weapon and try to take your life. I guess that's what's great about police work. Every call is different and you handle every call differently. But you prepare yourself for battle when you go on every call.

(Interviewer: Do you think you'll ever forget how the end of that barrel looked?) Nope. Never. I can see it right now as plain as I can see your face. It was just a big, cheap, ugly weapon. And when he raised it up and I saw the front of it, after he had fallen I was thinking, 'That was a Brown-ing Highpoint 9 mm he was just pointing at my head.' I've dealt with that weapon before from bad guys. I will never forget how that weapon looked as he was holding it in my face. When you can hear him breathing through the mask, you're close. If he had shot, we were probably so close he wouldn't have missed. I don't think he would have missed. I would have been hit somewhere. And, like I said, I was looking straight down the barrel. I'm afraid if he got a shot off I wouldn't be here. But, it's always a good day when the good guys win. So that was a good day, generally speaking.

Ever since then, when it gets dark and I know the employees in the restaurant are shutting down, I always drive through the parking lot. Just in case anybody else has any bad intentions, to let them know, hey, this is hallowed ground. Stay the hell away from here. 🍷

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